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CIA's Manual Violated Law, House Unit Says

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WASHINGTON—The House Intelligence Committee charged Wednesday that the CIA violated a law barring efforts to overthrow the government of Nicaragua when it produced a manual for U.S.-backed Nicaraguan rebels. But the committee absolved CIA chief William J. Casey of direct blame, saying the problem arose from "negligence, not intent to violate the law."

In a closed-door meeting with the panel, Casey acknowledged "shortcomings of management" in the officially covert program and promised to set up a "compliance office" in the agency to ensure that congressional directives are followed in the future, congressmen said.

Middle-Level Blamed

"The incident of the manual illustrates once again . . . that the CIA did not have adequate command and control of the entire Nicaraguan covert action," the Democratic-controlled committee said in a statement.

But the panel also decided that the author of the CIA manual had not intentionally violated a presidential order prohibiting the advocacy of assassination and concluded that middle-level agency officials, not Casey or his top aides, were to blame for the episode.

"As you know, they delegated authority to people below, and this is where the breakdown occurs," committee Chairman Edward P. Boland (D-Mass.) said. "He (Casey) couldn't possibly be in control of everything that's done in his agency."

Casey and CIA spokesman Pat Volz refused to comment on the House panel's action.

'Neutralize' Officials

The guerrilla manual, which caused a furor when it surfaced earlier this fall, was written by a CIA contract employee based on Marxist revolutionary texts, congressmen said.

The 90-page book urges the rebels to use techniques of "psychological warfare" to help overthrow Nicaragua's Marxist-led Sandinista regime. It also recommends "selective use of violence" to "neutralize" Sandinista officials—a passage that the Reagan Administration insists does not refer to assassination.

Although Casey defended the manual before the House panel, he also promised to ensure that all CIA employees read the presidential order that prohibits assassinations and to certify in writing that they will comply, according to another member of the panel, California Rep. Norman Y. Mineta (D-San Jose). A congressional aide said CIA staff officers already make such a certification but that contract employees like the one who wrote the manual do not.

Boland noted that the CIA already has disciplined six employees in connection with the case and said, "I don't anticipate any additional actions."

The panel was not unanimous in its support of the statement, which aides said some Republican members opposed. Also, Mineta complained that the committee was being too easy on Casey.

"It's an issue that is very, very hard to press to the wall," Mineta said, "and I think in this case the committee is deciding, in fact, that it is not one that we want to press to the wall."

Boland and Mineta said Casey told them that the manual apparently was never read in its entirety by CIA officials after it was written by a contract employee identified as John Kirkpatrick.

"Kirkpatrick brought it up from Honduras . . . and it sort of floated

around, it sat on someone's desk, but no one ever read it," Mineta told reporters.

Boland agreed, saying: "Anybody reading the manual would have caught the offensive material."

He said the panel and Casey disagreed over whether the agency had violated the prohibition against activities that seek to overthrow the Sandinista regime. Going somewhat beyond the committee's statement, Boland said, "This operation is just another indication . . . that the *contra* (rebel) movement was probably set in motion to overthrow the government of Nicaragua."

The prohibition against overthrowing the Sandinistas, known as the Boland Amendment, was passed by Congress in 1982, along with funding for the U.S.-backed contras. At the time, the Reagan Administration said its support for the rebels was aimed at pressuring the Sandinistas into dropping their support for leftist movements elsewhere in Central America, but Democratic congressmen were unconvinced.

Since then, Congress has cut off funding for the program entirely and the Boland Amendment has lapsed. However, the amendment was in effect at the time the manual was printed and distributed.



Associated Press

William J. Casey